

WE BORE THE BRUNTⁱ OF BOKO HARAM AND OTHER RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION
Voices of Trauma: Analysis of First-Hand Stories of Boko Haram Violence Reveals a Quagmire
for Widows and Orphans in Northeast Nigeria
Venue: Senate Dirksen Office Building Room 106
January 13, 2026
Rev. Rebecca Samuel Dali, PhDⁱⁱ

Appreciation: Thank you Sir Scott Weiner and organizers of this great Commission on International Religious Freedom for finding me worthy to participate and to share experience and those of my fellow Nigerians. I appreciate Nathan Hosler for nominating me. I am privilege to be here and a honor to be among my fellow participants from Vietnam, Egypt, Burma, Eritrea, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Algeria and me from Nigeria.

Abstract: The radical militant Islamic group, Boko Haram, has perpetrated violent and destructive acts throughout northeast and other parts of northern Nigeria since 2003. Those surviving Boko Haram insurgencies are exposed to deep trauma and face a quagmire of challenges threatening their survival and in procuring basic needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, and income. From 2010 to present, the Centre for Caring, Empowerment and Peace Initiatives provided relief and aid distribution in areas affected by Boko Haram activity. Survivors met at the aid distribution sites were offered the opportunity to share their stories, resulting over 6,238 documented first-hand accounts of Boko Haram violence and inflicted trauma. A random subset of 2,000 accounts were the analyzed for key factors such as reason for the attack, reports of death, gender, and age of the deceased, and the demographics of those surviving. Within the 2,185 survivor stories, 7,137 deaths and 680 abductions were reported, having taken place primarily in the states of Borno, Bauchi, Benue, Adamawa, Yobe, Plateau, and Kaduna. CCEPI have engraved names of 160,000 in its Memorial Garden of the deceased, the majority were male 123,475 (77.17%) at an average age of 18-59 years. Female 36,525 (22.83%). Unfortunately, Christians form the majority of people killed 98,971 (61.86%) out of 160,000 killed, Muslims were sadly killed 61,029(38.14%) out of 160,000 killed.

Strikingly, this has resulted in a large population of surviving widows and fatherless orphans. Sixty-five percent of survivors reporting a relationship with the deceased identified themselves as widows and widows with orphan children and elderly dependents. The 1,300 widows with orphan children reported that the number of surviving children they were supporting was 6.2 with a standard deviation of 2.5. These results underpin the dramatic need for targeted trauma healing, school fees for orphan children, food and nutrition, shelter and healthcare aid, and job and skills training for empowering resiliency in this newly emerging group of surviving widows and fatherless orphan children.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Nigeria, Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Plateau, ietnam, Egypt, Burma, Eritrea, Nicaragua, Pakistan and Algeria. women, widows, orphans

Introduction:

A brief history of Boko Haram insurgency and counterinsurgency - In Nigeria the radical militant Islamist group known in the Hausa language as *Boko Haram* has perpetrated violent acts against civilian, civic, and military populations since 2003 [Lorimer 2012]. The organization officially known as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad*, which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad", was formed in 2002 under the leadership of charismatic Muslim cleric Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria [Matfess 2017a]. Yusuf's core objective as leader of Boko Haram was to replace, through *jihad* if necessary, the secular Nigerian state with a regime adhering to strict *Sharia* Law, applicable throughout the entire country [Maszka 2017].

The years between 2003 and 2008 are primarily characterized by widespread propaganda and recruitment, disputes with and targeted assassinations of civic and religious leaders, and isolated incursions with the Nigeria military [Matfess 2017a]. However, after ongoing altercations with military and police during Operation Flush II, which was aimed at drawing out and limiting movement of Boko Haram members, Boko Haram unleashed attacks on police stations, prisons, schools, churches, and houses from July 25 – July 30, 2009 in the States of Borno, Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, Gombe, and Katsina [Mustapha 2014]. Widespread counterinsurgency measures by joint Nigeria Government security and Police forces, characterized as gory and a brutal door-to-door interrogation and execution tactics, resulted in the execution of Boko Haram leader Mohammad Yusuf on July 30 [Adesoji 2010].

Boko Haram went underground, re-organized, and resurfaced in 2010 with a vengeance under leadership of Yusuf's second in command, Abubakar Shekau [Matfess 2017a]. The first phase of resurgence utilized drive-by shootings, house-by-house attacks, and bombings (primarily suicide and car) to eliminate politicians, security officials, and village leaders who had collaborated with secular government and security forces during Operation Flush II [Mohammed 2014]. Boko Haram's success, and failure of the government to protect its citizens, emboldened passive Boko Haram members into action. By 2011, tactics turned to slaughtering as opposed to shooting of opponents [Mohammed 2014]. During this time Boko Haram coerced 240 abducted children to 'suicide' bomb markets and depots in military occupied urban centers where they could not otherwise infiltrate, more than any other insurgency in history [Bloom 2015]. In July 2014, exploiting its increasing seizures of Nigerian military equipment, Boko Haram began targeting remote villages in efforts to weaken joint civilian-military operations. Boko Haram overran entire towns before military forces could arrive [Zenn 2018]. By August 2014, Boko Haram had claimed Caliphate rule over territory roughly the size of Belgium in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States.

In response, the Multi-National Joint Task Force was re-formed in January 2015 between Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Benin, and Nigeria. On March 27, 2015, the Task Force retook Gwoza, Borno, overthrowing the would-be state [Thurston 2016]. By July 2016, the Nigerian Army and Task Force had dislodged Boko Haram from the bulk of their claimed territory, but not in entirety. Since then, Boko Haram has lost much of its lethality, with only about 1,700 fatalities in 2017 and 2018 compared to over 8,000 in 2014 [Campbell 2019]. This is likely due to fracturing and changes of leadership within the group. However, the rate of attacks continues at the same

steady rate since 2014, resulting in the ongoing displacement of residents from villages [Matfess 2019].

Boko Haram's Aftermath— Since Boko Haram insurgency erupted in 2009, news and media have reported that 15,996 persons have been killed directly by Boko Haram, 15,595 persons have been killed during altercations between Boko Haram and Military altercations (ambiguous perpetrator), and 7,311 persons have been killed directly by the Military [Campbell 2019]. In total it is estimated that over 54,000 deaths have occurred related to the Boko Haram crisis [Campbell 2019]. Abductions total over 10,000 men, boys, girls, and young women, who are used for both terrorist operations and non-violent chores [Matfess 2017b]. While several hundred abducted girls have been released, unknown numbers have been sold, integrated into the Boko Haram community, or murdered. In addition, Boko Haram's former and ongoing raids of towns and villages has resulted in the internal displacement of over 3.3 million residents of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, with over 1.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) being Nigerian residents from Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states [IDMC 2018].

For many of the IDP households, the male and/or female head have been killed in the Boko Haram crisis, leaving behind survivors left to cope with the trauma of the aftermath. However, prior to this analysis precise details on the demographics of these survivors are largely unknown. Such information is critical for identifying and understanding the most vulnerable groups within the IDP population, providing aid and support, and framing aid policy. From 2010 to the present, the Centre for Caring, Empowerment, and Peace Initiatives (CCEPI), a Nigeria nongovernment organization, has functioned to bring food, clean water, medical aid, trauma healing, skills training, and housing assistance to survivors of the Boko Haram crisis in Northeast Nigeria, as well as reintegration programs for escaped abductees back into societies. Survivors who access CCEPI organized aid distribution sites are offered the opportunity to share their stories. This has resulted in over 6,238 documented first-hand accounts of Boko Haram violence and inflicted trauma. These stories contain critical insights into the challenges facing survivors.

Methods:

Stories from survivors of the Boko Haram crisis who have lost one or more family members were collected and written on-site at CCEPI aid distribution centers sometimes by trained CCEPI staff, or the survivors themselves. CCEPI staff asked survivors to describe who and when the family member was killed, how they were killed, who in the household is still surviving, how the traumatic experience has affected them, and any other details the survivor would like to share. Stories were collected between 2010 -2025 and mostly in the states of Adamawa, Borno, Plateau and Yobe. Stories were transcribed into electronic format for preservation and a random subset of 2,185 stories were each analyzed for the following information: deceased victim(s) age, gender, and date and location of death; age and relationship of the survivor to the deceased, number and age of other survivors in the household, any comments on the family's religion and perceived reason for the Boko Haram attack, and any comments on the perceived current and future challenges facing the survivors in the household. These data were extracted, compiled, and statistically analyzed for average, standard deviation, and distribution.

Results and Discussion:

Deaths perpetrated by Boko Haram - The trauma inflicted by Boko Haram violence, as recounted in the 2,185 stories, was pervasive, affecting both those that suffered until the point of death, and those that survived the attacks. The 2,185 stories reported 7,137 deaths (Table 1) perpetrated by Boko Haram primarily. An average of 3.2 deaths per household were reported, the majority (79%) of the victims being men and older boys (typically sons of the killed father). The victim's average age was 39 ± 16 years (minimum age was 14 years, maximum age was 78 years, and median age was 35.5 years). The surprisingly low frequency of murdered young children and females appears to be a direct result of the Boko Haram *modus operandi*. In 989 stories, as families fled from the houses and villages in different directions, men and older boys were specifically hunted down and overtaken by Boko Haram insurgents in vehicles or on foot. Thirty-eight stories loss their whole family members, some over 20 members, over half lost more than 2. Ninety-five stories recounted how men and older boys were actively stripped away and separated from their wives and children when the family was overtaken as a unit by Boko Haram. In all cases, before or after witnessing the killing of the male(s), the women and children were ordered to run away at the threat of abduction, rape, or murder. Against pleas by the wives and children not to take the male away (n=20) or to kill them together as a family (n=5), the unwavering Boko Haram response was that they wanted nothing to do with the women and children.

From these observations it indicates that Boko Haram seeks to achieve its objective of eliminating those who threaten or oppose establishment of a pure Islamic State by targeting adult, and soon to be adult males. Women and children are not completely excluded from Boko Haram violence, however. Nearly 10,000 young men, boys, women, and girls have been abducted by Boko Haram for the purpose combat and suicide bomber training, performing tasks in Boko Haram camps, carrying ammunition during battle, and serving as wives to Boko Haram members [Matfess 2017b]. In the 500 stories alone, 85 abductions were reported, 15 male, 61 female, and 9 unidentified, indicating that for every 10 murders there is 1 abduction. Based on media and analytical reports [Campbell 2019] this is in close agreement to the estimated ratio of 1 abduction per 5 murders.

Psychological trauma suffered by survivor of Boko Haram violence – The lethal targeting of males and older boys by book haram has resulted in a disproportionate number of new widow survivors with dependent orphans. Of 2,185 respondents who submitted stories, 1,476 reported their relationship to the deceased. Overwhelmingly, 1,420 individuals (65%) identified themselves as widowed wives, with the remainder identifying as orphans 240 (11%), parents 219 (10%), siblings 197 (9%), and widowers 22 (1%) (Table 2). Central to the trauma experienced by these survivors is both the realization of the loss of a family member and the first-hand experience of witnessing the murder itself and/or the corpse of the deceased. Of the 7,137 reported deaths, 4, 282 were witnessed by the respondent directly or recounted to respondent by eye-witnesses when the respondent retrieved the body of the deceased family member. Most were killed while fleeing from homes, businesses, places of worship, and their agricultural fields

by open gunfire during Boko Haram attacks and at gunpoint after capture (68%). Alternatively, a significant fraction 1,784 (25%) were beheaded and dismembered by sword or cut and impaled by knife. A much fewer percentage were killed in bomb blast 468 (2.6%) and in a house, field, or place of business set on fire 32 (1.2%) (Table 1).

One woman recounted, “They forced my children to watch their father killed by torture. They cut his hands, leg, and tortured him to death while they were laughing and chanting ‘*Allah har ku bar,*’ (God is Great)”. Another woman vividly remembered, “While we were crying I heard the voice of my son James calling me, ‘mummy I am dead, I will die like my father help, me mummy, I do not want to be Boko Haram, they want to take me away mummy help me.’ I ran to see what is happening, I saw my son in their van. I tried to enter the van but they push me and take away my son, I keep hearing his voice screaming, ‘mummy help! Mummy you are abandoning me to go with them?’ I was helpless my husband was killed and my son disappeared in a thin air.”

Clearly, Boko Haram’s primary tactic is hand-to-hand combat, leaving witnesses with lasting negative memories of their assailants. Over half of the survivors 1, 298 out of 2,185 survivors directly expressed persistent feelings of trauma and shock from the experience, and 170 stated harbored feelings of anger against Boko Haram. 201 women reported their hospitalization after fainting in response to the shock of seeing their husband killed, and three of 180 women pregnant at the time of attack miscarried in the third trimester in response to the psycho-physical trauma. The trauma also has ethno-religious resonances and lasting ramifications on Christian-Muslim relations. Sixty percent of the respondents (1,311 out of 2,185) indicated a perceived religious motivation behind the killing of their family member. These included:

- When interrogated by Boko Haram, the victim had a Christian name and was killed because of it (66%)
- The victim was associated with Christianity (inside or in the vicinity of a church) and was killed by Boko Haram because of it (22%)
- The victim was interrogated by Boko Haram, demanded to convert to Islam, and was killed upon refusal to comply (10%)
- The victim was Muslim but would not join Boko Haram and was killed because of it (2.3%)

This results in harbored sentiments of mistrust and deep hurt. In the Christian context of forgiveness of enemies for their trespasses, 678 respondents indicated having difficulty, but ultimately forgiving Boko Haram of their deeds. In many instance (608 of 678) respondents indicated trauma healing and assistance from humanitarian aid agencies such as CCEPI as a key component of the forgiveness process.

Challenges faced by survivors of Boko Haram violence – The disparity in the frequency of male to female deaths has critical implications for the challenges faced by Boko Haram survivors presently and in the future. Of the 1,240 widows, 1,125 reported that they were currently providing for orphans and elderly dependents in their household, with an average of 5.2 ± 2.5 dependents per household (Figure 1A). Dependent ages ranged from newborn to 82 years, and the majority of the dependent population was comprised of ages newborn to 20 years (Figure

1B). Interestingly, for each age range approximately half were male and half female dependents, showing both sexes are affected in becoming orphaned or an elderly dependent. Reflective of the burden dependents are placing on the primarily widow population, widows reported the provision of food for the children and infants as the greatest challenge they were facing (Table 3).

One mother recounted how after the attack “we found ourselves in a Village called Nkaffamiya, I stayed there for over a month where suffering is the order of the day, people were drinking contaminated water and people are dying of hunger both little children and old.” Another remembered, “for two weeks we moved from mountain to mountain, our shoes spoiled, the children were crying because we all were hungry and tired...some died.” UNHCR has reported severe famine in the North East Nigeria since 2016 [UNCHR 2024]

In addition, inability to find a house or pay rent, inability to access healthcare and medication, inability to farm food, to afford essential non-food item supplies (clothes, shoes, cooking equipment, farming supplies), and afford school fees were all expressed challenges being faced by the widow households with and without dependents. This directly stems from displacement of the individuals from their villages by Boko Haram into areas where jobs and livelihood are scarce, such as IDP camps, or from the loss of valuable property. Almost all 2,185 of the respondents report fleeing from their communities especially in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe into neighboring towns, states, or bordering Cameroon. While fleeing or upon return, 1,202 (55%) reported their house and property burned by Boko Haram and 88 (4%) reported Boko Haram demanding and taking survivors money. Therefore, in remote areas where resources are already limited, loss of home and other property and available cash confronts survivors with severe challenges, particularly those with dependents.

Conclusions:

These studies reveal that Boko Haram’s predominant massacre of adult males has engendered a new population of vulnerable widows and orphaned dependents. While the exact magnitude of widows with and without dependents is unknown, estimates can be placed on the order of 300,000 given the reported total deaths over 350,000 based on CCEPI data and near 54,000 [Campbell 2019]. In addition to coping with the trauma of losing a family member for all 2,185 respondents, a large majority (70%) are traumatized widows with and without dependents actively struggling to procure food, shelter, essentials such as clothes and household and farming equipment, and medical treatment for themselves and dependents. The situation is worse for young women who have children and have been unable to remarry. Both Christianity and Islam religions do not allow their members to marry those of the opposite religion, limiting opportunities. This is especially problematic for escaped Boko Haram abductees, who are rejected by their husbands for being tainted by ‘bad blood’. Only repented Boko Haram who were given some of the girls they raped in captivity as wives including some of the Chibok girls who were Christians but claim to be converted and married their perpetrators (Nkeki 2024). Many men do not want the extra responsibility of caring for children that are not their own. Some women are forced by the situation to get into polygamous marriages, or engage in prostitution, exposing them to greater emotional and physical vulnerabilities, including rape,

abuse, and HIV/AIDS. Victimization can ensue, particularly since in Nigerian culture the widows are often rejected and blamed by family members for the loss of the husband [Dali 2012]. It's a combination of cultural and religious beliefs reinforced by widespread poverty that puts widows, particularly with dependents, at arguably the highest risk.

Aside from the violent trauma experienced by the orphaned children during the Boko Haram attacks, the challenges facing them is also acute. Given the population of orphaned children is approximately half male and half female, both sexes are at risk of morbidity and malnutrition, depression, low self-esteem, anger, and fear. While the current activities and practices of the orphaned children in this study are unknown, historically children in impoverished families resort to scavenging, street hawking, begging, child labor, and drug and alcohol involvement. This puts both sexes at risk of social stigmatization and abduction, males at the risk of recruitment into the military or radical groups such as Boko Haram, and women at the risk of abuse and sexual exploitation.

While the total number of children unable to go to school is unknown, it is evident that procuring enough money to pay school fees is an ongoing struggle. Historically, the Nigerian culture is a patriarchal society with women relegated to the background. In traditional villages and communities, property rights are rarely conferred to women [Dali 2012] making it difficult for women to be independent and self-sustaining. Rather, traditional marriage is the normal future for Nigerian children, and the average Nigerian male and female want a family size of 8 and 6.5 children, respectively [NPC]. Therefore, the disruption in education and career training endangers men from having employable skill sets and being capable of fulfilling the traditional role of providing income for their future family. Coordinately for women, this not only inhibits them from pursuing the few self-sustaining opportunities available (e.g. tailoring, cosmetology, co-operative farming) but also undermines the stability and financial security needed to care for the home, children, and farm.

Therefore, policies constructed by governmental and non-governmental organizations aimed at addressing the Boko Haram issue and assisting those affected by the Boko Haram perpetrated violence must consider the needs of a large, heretofore overlooked population of widows and orphans. To this end, programs focused on trauma healing and rebuilding trust within communities will be critical for strengthening the strained ethno-religious Christian-Muslim relations and building lasting peace. Both traditional education, and skills and career training opportunity programs are necessary to overcome the education gap experienced by the orphan dependents whose schooling and career training have been disrupted by Boko Haram violence, and to provide career opportunities for the widows to support their families. Lastly, is the need for affordable housing programs that support this new population of low- to no-income single-parent families with dependents. Without adequate housing, basic needs of shelter, hygiene and sanitation, and properly prepared food and water cannot be met, leading to further illness and vulnerability of widows and orphans.

Discrimination against Christians in Nigeria

Christian students in public funded schools in most northern states in Nigeria are denied the right to be taught Christian Religious Studies while their Muslim counterparts receive Islamic Religious Education at the expense of the public treasury. Churches are not allowed to build church in most locations whereas mosques are freely built sometimes with public funds. Furthermore, Churches are denied titles to the lands on which they are built. The states in Nigeria are by law vested with title of all lands within their territory and sharia rarely grant Christians title to lands on which their Churches are built. The churches are often subjected to all forms of harassment and threats of demolition of their churches on account of not having title which the state denied them in the first place.

Additionally, Christian students are denied places to study courses like medicine, law, engineering and other professional courses in public funded Universities and other tertiary institutions even when they possess all requisite qualifications. Similarly, Christians suffer discrimination in terms of employment opportunities in public establishments. When they are able to cross this hurdle, they face a tough time in progressing in their career in public service. Often too public services and utilities are not extended to Christian dominated areas. They are left to suffer all forms of deprivations. Their areas are often overlooked in terms of public funded development.

Recommendation

First, we thank you very much President Trump and his Executives and Christians for considering the persecution of Christians, particularly in Nigeria and for the practical action taken to address the problem. We urge that this action be sustained until significant change is visible. If not, Nigerian Christians may face more persecution.

Secondly, to address the roots of religious persecution and terrorism in Nigeria, politicians, religious clerics and security agents who sponsor, support and sympathize with the terrorist should be identified and marked brought to book.

Thirdly, the two Contradictory Constitution operating in Nigerian democracy should be considered as impediment to true democracy and good governance in Nigeria.

CCEPI serve all, Christian and Muslim without religious discrimination, following Jesus' guidance to love and help every single person who needs help. So, my work includes helping people from ALL religions--as I have shown for almost 4 decades. In CCEPI we are uniting people across religions to stop war and coexist peacefully. We pay special focus on women and young people who are often in need. Even in the difficult settings, we reach many people of all religions with a full range of relief, compassionate, individualized care, and services.

CCEPI provide humanitarian relief and create livelihood, family reintegration, and other programs so people can care for themselves, and even live with their communities again. Through CCEPI women and girls whose whole family were killed and property vandalized now own thriving business and good life. We really appreciate the attention and focus on the plight of Christians and all people of other religions. I am pleading Nigerian leaders to be compassionate and provide lifesaving support for all so that we can have peace. Please America

support the Nigerian government to be more active in a helpful way to ensure Nigerians live in peace and prosperity.

Acknowledgements – The author would like to thank the CCEPI volunteers who collected, transcribed, and compiled the survivors' stories. The authors acknowledge funding and assistance from our numerous former national and International donors, and individual donors without which CCEPI cannot provide the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional, and economic support to numerous friends whom we walked in each other's shoes and bear the brunt.

I acknowledge Prof. Justin A. North, Department of Microbiology, The Ohio State University, and Patricia L. Krabacher and Rev. Samuel D Dali, helped in analyzing the first 500 stories.

References:

- Adesoji, A. 2010. 'The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria' in *Africa Spectrum* 45(2): 95-108.
- Bloom, M. and Matfess, H. 2015. "Women as Symbols and Swords in Boko Haram's Terror," in *PRISM* 6: 105 – 121.
- Campbell, J. 2019. 'Nigeria Security Tracker Database', *The Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>. Accessed 18 March 2019.
- Dali, R. 2012. 'An Ethical Analysis of the Plight of Women in Violent Conflict in Northern Nigeria (1980-2008). Dissertation. Federal University of Jos.
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). 2018, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, Oslo: Norwegian Refugee Council.
- Loimeier, R. 2012. 'The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria' in *Africa Spectrum* 47(2-3): 137 – 155.
- Maszka, J. 2017. *Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram: Guerrilla Insurgency or Strategic Terrorism*, London: World Scientific.
- Matfess, H. 2017a. 'Boko Haram: history and context' in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Matfess, H. 2017b. *Women and the war on Boko Haram: wives, weapons, witness*. London: Zed Books.
- Matfess, H. 2019. 'The New Normal: Continuity and Boko Haram's Violence in North East Nigeria', *Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)*. <https://www.acledata.com/19/02/11/>. Accessed 18 March 2019
- Mohammed, K. 2014. 'The message and methods of Boko Haram' in *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state of Nigeria*. ed. Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos. Holland: African Studies Center./.
- Mustapha, A.R. 2014. 'Understanding Boko Haram' in *Sects & Social Disorder: Muslim identities & conflict in northern Nigeria*. ed. A. R. Mustapha. England: James Currey.
- National Population Commission (NPC) and ICF International. 2014. 'Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013' Rockville, Maryland: National Population Commission and ICF International.
- Nkeki, Yakubu. Interviewed. March 5, 2024.
- Thurston, A. 2016. 'The disease of unbelief: Boko Haram's religions and political worldview' in *The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*. 22: 1 – 33.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2024, *Nigeria Situation 2024: Supplementary Appeal*, Geneva: UNHCR.

Zenn, J. 2018. ‘Boko Haram's Conquest for the Caliphate: How Al Qaeda Helped Islamic State Acquire Territory’ in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. epub ahead of print DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2018.1442141, 13 March 2018

ⁱ Thousands of stories are found in this book. Rebecca Samuel Dali, *We Bore the Brunt: The Impact of Violence Against Women and Decades of Suffering in Nigeria*, Mount Joy, CCEPI USA, 2024.

ⁱⁱ Dr. Rebecca Samuel Dali, Ph.D. is an ordained Minister of Church of the Brethren, also the founder of Centre for Caring, Empowerment and Peace Initiatives (CCEPI) in Adamawa State, Nigeria, and Dali is the Nigerian Coordination of Strategic Action for Community Development, Nigerian Chapter of Global Movement for Community-led Development (MCLD). In August 2017, Dr. Rebecca Dali, was awarded the United Nations Sergio Vieira de Mello Humanitarian of the Year award for CCEPI’s work in reintegration of returned Boko Haram abductees and the Centre’s on-going work with widows, orphans and the most vulnerable in high risk area of Northern Nigeria. CCEPI has been delivering humanitarian services since 1989 and served over 2 million people in partnership with National & International Organizations. CCEPI data shows over 200,000 People killed by Boko Haram and our 37-years of data gathering and research reveals that there is need to build resilience among widows, who have been left with thousands of orphans/malnourished children who need food, shelter, and education.

CCEPI livelihood centres are located in Jos (2015), Plateau state, Wandali (2018) in Borno state, and Michika (2016), Sina Kwande (2019) on Cameroon border and Yola (2016) in Adamawa state of N. Nigeria. The livelihood centres have graduated 60,000 skilled widows and orphans and performed trauma healing as part of their 9-month training process.

Tables and Figures:

Table 1: Demographics of victims reported killed by Boko Haram from 2,185 survivors’ stories

Victim Identity	Count	% Total	Mode of Death	Count	% Total
Man	3,858	72.3	Open-fire or at gunpoint	4,853	68
Woman	1,796	2.7	Beheaded or dismembered	1,784	25.6
Boy	992	6.4	Burned	32	1.2
Girl	491	0.3	Bomb blast	468	2.6
Total	7,137	100.0	Total	7,137	100.0

Table 1: Demographics of victims reported killed by Boko Haram from 2,185 survivors’ stories

Victim Identity	Count	% Total	Mode of Death	Count	% Total
Man	3,858	72.3	Open-fire or at gunpoint	4,853	68

Woman	1,796	2.7	Beheaded or dismembered	1,784	25.6
Boy	992	6.8	Burned	32	1.2
Girl	491	3.2	Bomb blast	468	2.6
Total	7,137	100.0	Total	7,137	100.0

Table 2: Relationship of reporting survivor to the Boko Haram victim

Survivor Identity	Count	% Total
Widowed wife	1,420	65
Widower husband	22	1
Orphans	240	11
Mother	189	8.4
Father	39	1.9
Sibling	197	9
Total	2,107	100

Table 3: Challenges experienced by widows

Challenge Reported	Count	% Widows
cannot provide enough food (non-infants)	1,005	39.2
cannot provide enough food/breastmilk (infants)	249	7.5
cannot afford essential supplies (non-food)	272	14.9
cannot afford school fees	1,012	14.1
cannot afford house / rent	2	31.8
cannot care for the sick / buy medication	42	16.5
cannot find a job	14	5.5
cannot farm (no equipment / seeds / livestock)	52	20.4

Based on 500 stories

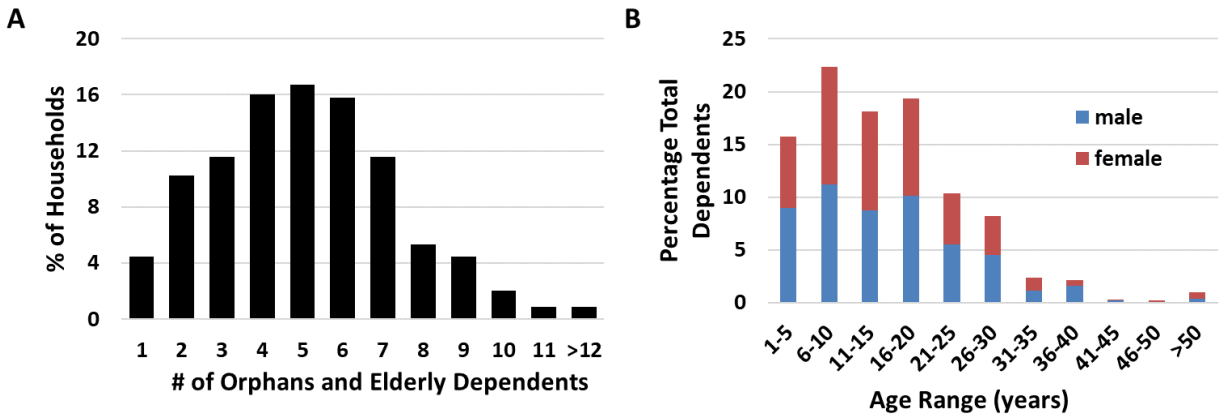


Figure 1: Orphan and elderly dependent demographics. A) Number of orphans and elderly dependents per household (n=202 households). B) Age and gender distribution of orphans and elderly dependents (n=1090 dependents) supported by widows and widowers of the households in (A).